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The Echo
and
A Bit O' Verse

EGMONT W. RUSCHKE



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THE ECHO *and*
A BIT O' VERSE

THE ECHO
and
A BIT O' VERSE
by

EGMONT W. RUSCHKE



BOSTON
THE STRATFORD CO., PUBLISHERS
1918

PS 3535
U658 E.2

Copyright 1918
The STRATFORD CO., Publishers
Boston, Mass.



The Alpine Press, Boston, Mass., U. S. A.

MAY 16 1918

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no 1

Dedication

There shines a light across the sea,
A beacon light to ships like me,
It casts its golden rays on waves,
And from the wind and rocks it saves
The plunging craft, the soul that sails
To do, to serve, to live! through gales.

My Mother

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THE ECHO

A COMEDY

*My eyes have been closed for these long weary years,
Yet echoes of life thrill my soul with their cheers,
And you, who can see, live in echoes of yore.*

Preface

I

The Echo is intended to be a suggestive play. By suggestive I do not mean spicy dialogue and bedroom settings. It is intended to be suggestive of serious social considerations. The remark in the dialogue by Mrs. Douglas about the servant, George Washington Jones, that he can only "change his cage," since social and economic forces are more potent than political, is one of the most obvious but unrecognized truths that the world needs to consider. The ideal, represented by law, and the sentimental, represented by so-called political considerations, do not exercise as great an influence as the economic and social.

II

A critical analysis of society reveals its individuals as made up of the impulses of heredity and environment, with economic, sociological, religious, and temperamental idiosyncrasies of character, not to mention conflicting class, family, racial, and national interests. Life is a fabric curiously woven of many strands which inter-lap and overlap, which wear and tear.

In dealing with all social questions, with labor, poverty, crime and divorce, this Aristotelian consideration of the many factors of life must not be forgotten. A complete, or satisfactory solution must settle all considerations.

PREFACE

III

This is true in international affairs. The various causes of war must all be adjusted or eradicated before peace will be possible.

IV

Should a blind girl marry? The question is academic, but it is interesting as being representative of the question of marriage of individuals who are physical inefficients of society. Doubtlessly we will answer the question in the negative, unless we ourselves are afflicted, when the chances are that we will consider our own case peculiar and exceptional.

V

The Civil War marked the end of chattel slavery. It marked the birth of a nation where before there had been a confederation. Consequently, as an American, I am interested in it and am proud of the result. But I confess a somewhat malicious delight in shattering, if I have done so, the legend of a perfect president commanding a host of angels. I do not question the sincerity or wisdom of the people of the North or of Lincoln, in 1863, any more than I question the wisdom of Wilson and the people of the United States in 1918, but I refuse to prostrate myself to the conception that the North was perfection itself.

The people of the North and South of that time were much like ourselves. They were neither saints nor devils. Lincoln was not a paragon of virtue and wisdom, nor was Lee a vile traitor. They were

PREFACE

both noble human characters, devoted to the cause which they conceived to be right. They were corner-stones of strength to the North and South. They both made mistakes. Lincoln was reluctantly forced into about every measure which has won the applause of history; his chief virtue was his determined conservatism. Lee frankly admitted that the loss of Gettysburg rested on his shoulders.

When we recognize that 1863 was as I have presented it, we will not despair of the present, which happens to be 1918 at the time of writing, and which will be equally true in 2018. Possibly the reader will be persuaded to study the Civil War in this critical spirit, and form a new estimate of present conditions and contemporary leaders. Unless the reader has what Shaw calls the faculty of being "imaginative, without illusions, and creative without religion, loyalty, patriotism or any of the common ideals," the Echo will be not the beginning of thought but the end, as institutions should not be the ends in themselves, but the means of achieving richer, nobler and better life.

DRAMATIS PERSONAE

MRS. JAMES DOUGLAS.

MISS PHYLLIS DOUGLAS.

GEORGE WASHINGTON JONES.

MRS. AMELIE PECK.

MR. ARCHIBALD PECK.

DAISY.

JANE.

COL. JAMES DOUGLAS.

CHARLES.

DR. MAPES.

(In the order of speech.)

SCENE

The home of a rather well-to-do family in a small town of New York State.

TIME

February, eighteen sixty three.

Nine o'clock in the morning.

The Echo

A church bell is tolling nine as the curtain rises, revealing an old fashioned dining room in which a log fire burns brightly. Old family portraits hang on the walls; morning sunlight streams gaily into the room. Its brightness is intensified by the snow, seen through the window, covering the ground on this February morning in the year 1863. Breakfasting at the table are Mrs. James Douglas, a middle-aged lady, with hair slightly tinged with grey, and with features that bespeak strong character. Opposite her is her daughter Phyllis, who is an intelligent and pretty young woman about twenty years of age. They are both dressed in the fashion of the time, — hoop-skirts and parted hair. The log fire is smouldering.

We notice that Mrs. Douglas looks intently at a draped picture, and wipes away a tear.

Standing at the side-board is an old dorky, George Washington Jones, who almost immediately after the curtain rises pours coffee into cups and serves it. The furniture is of the period immediately preceding this. Phyllis feels her way towards the sugar.

MRS. DOUGLAS

Sugar, dear?

PHYLLIS

Yes, please.

THE ECHO

G. W. JONES

Sho' yo' don' want muffins, M'am?

MRS. DOUGLAS

No George — Oh, did a newspaper come today?

G. W. JONES

'Scuse me, mam, but I'se kept it till af'er breakfast, fo' yo' don' eat when dat's once in yo' hands.

All three smile.

MRS. DOUGLAS

Wicked tyrant!

PHYLLIS

Simply because you are the only man here you should not be too hard on us.

G. W. JONES

Wa' someone's got ter take massa's place, else —

MRS. DOUGLAS

Massa! George you came to us ten years ago by the underground system, and yet you say master. Why don't you take the freedom offered?

G. W. JONES

Yo' don' understand. He'll all'ys be ma' massa.

PHYLLIS

It's strange that people allow sentiment to interfere with freedom.

THE ECHO

MRS. DOUGLAS

Yes, but it's not all sentiment. What could he do with his freedom? If he left us he would simply change his cage. Social and economic forces are even stronger than political.

PHYLLIS, *smilingly addressing G. W. Jones.*

And anyway, it's no use to argue with a man. They argue simply to exercise their tongue.

G. W. JONES

I dunno! Ladies je's smile or cry.

PHYLLIS, *laughing.*

And that ends the argument?

G. W. JONES

'Ceptin' when a lady fights a lady. Den dey scratch, bite. . . . I'll get yo' papa'. (*Exit at left.*)

MRS. DOUGLAS

Our poor, misunderstood sex. Well, a tigress is a tigress.

PHYLLIS

But isn't George thoughtful. He is really quite intelligent.

MRS. DOUGLAS

Intelligent? He is intelligent enough to remember some of Harold's expressions. (*Phyllis suddenly is serious.*)

THE ECHO

PHYLLIS

I had never thought of that. It's true....

MRS. DOUGLAS

This coffee is delicious.

(George Washington Jones enters with paper on a silver tray and places it before Mrs. Douglas.)

PHYLLIS

I have never tasted better. . . . I feel like running. If I could see I would run until I dropped from exhaustion.

(Mrs. Douglas is reading the paper. Phyllis almost immediately asks.)

PHYLLIS

What does it say, mother?

MRS. DOUGLAS

Kindly allow me to read it first.

PHYLLIS

Pardon me. . . . of course. . . . George. . . . today, it is beautiful, is it not?

G. W. JONES

Yes, Miss.

PHYLLIS

I feel it. . . . I feel as if the world were purring.

Mrs. Douglas shakes her head and frowns.

THE ECHO

PHYLLIS

Was there no letter?

G. W. JONES

No, Miss, dere were none.

MRS. DOUGLAS

I do declare!

PHYLLIS

What, mother?

MRS. DOUGLAS

I must read this carefully this afternoon.

PHYLLIS

Is there anything new about this dreadful war?

MRS. DOUGLAS

President Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation is said to be a mistake. Mr. Seward has a letter, published here, stating it was bad policy.

PHYLLIS

But how was it bad?

MRS. DOUGLAS

The Border States, and many lukewarm people and property interests in the north feel it is a blow at the security of private property.

PHYLLIS

But has not northern enthusiasm increased? Now slavery, as well as the Union, hangs in the balance.

THE ECHO

MRS. DOUGLAS

Enlistments have fallen off and the government is finding it even more difficult to get money. Why was an ignorant backwoodsman elected president?

PHYLLIS

I think he has been tactful, even to the point of weakness. He has driven us into a war, but he didn't want to. It's the system, the stupid system, which prevents nations from quietly attending and adjusting their difficulties. (*Removes Coffee.*)

MRS. DOUGLAS

I don't know where and how you became a pacifist, Phyllis. Don't you see the glory of war?

PHYLLIS

Its glory is not comparable with its horror.

MRS. DOUGLAS

Confess that you feel a thrill when you hear martial music.

PHYLLIS

Yes! I like its briskness, the tramp of feet, the courage, organization and activity. But it's all destructive. There is a hollow sound. It is activity, yet fruitless activity; it is intense, but barren.

MRS. DOUGLAS

It is not barren. You admit it compels courage.

THE ECHO

PHYLLIS

If I could see, as I remember the world, it is a delicate blend; it is quiet. Like the birds that sing in the trees, a harmony and a melody exist, I think, — except when men spend their resources, time and genius in preparing for war, and are too lazy, stupid or indifferent to provide means for avoiding war.

MRS. DOUGLAS

Peoples do not fight as if they were lazy. And nature is not all beautiful and creative; it is also destructive. The stronger kill the weak; the fittest survive.

PHYLLIS

But man, though weaker than many animals, maintains himself because he can think. This faculty enabling him to exist, should enable him to exist sensibly and constructively. God is a struggling God; if I could see, I, too, would go into the world and fight; let man struggle, but struggle intelligently, ordering his life without the lowest attributes of the beast. I may be a pacifist because I cannot fight. . . . Now that we are in the war we must see it through. The Union must be preserved, and slavery abolished. . . .

But, Oh, the horror, the waste and the sorrow of it all.

MRS. DOUGLAS

Horror, waste and sorrow. But what is the alternative?

THE ECHO

PHYLLIS

The alternative is a new vision of humanity. Humanity? Why it's a new word to the world. Teach the world that the nation is as subordinate to humanity as is the family to the nation. Patriotism must be broadened and extended.

Not by the refusal to fight, but by the refusal to allow the real or imaginary causes of war to exist and develop will peace come. Only when nations regard treaties as self-imposed restrictions to be observed, will peace be possible, for on the respect of a nation's word, on the honor alike of individual and nation, rests all morality and, in the last analysis, all law.

MRS. DOUGLAS

I agree with you that nations must value their honor as highly as do individuals. But how are you going to teach the world the truth that there is an internationalism transcending nationalism?

PHYLLIS

How was patriotism born? Men recognized its wisdom. Men must learn that there are two kinds of nationalism. War is caused by the narrow kind, which must be broadened. When the narrow selfishness of nations is removed and altruism implanted; when all the peoples of the world make their governments free from the control of groups bent on advancing their own interests, and free from the scramble for colonies; when democracy is regnant in all the nations as a bulwark of national sovereignty and non-intervention, war will cease. Health is not an ideal

THE ECHO

but a state attendant on freedom from disease. Peace is not an ideal, but a condition incident to achievement of the ideal. Remove the disease, and you have health. Secure liberty, freedom and justice, and the causes of war will have been removed, and peace will be inevitable. Only by unifying the world and broadening the perception and sympathies of the world to recognize such unification will men beat their swords into plowshares and the golden chord of peace dominate the symphony of life.

Loud knocking at door. Evidently a metal knocker.

G. W. JONES

Sho' somebody's dere.

MRS. DOUGLAS

Please see who it is, George.

G. W. JONES

Yes ma'm. (*Exit center door.*)

Loud knocking repeated.

PHYLLIS

I wonder who it is. I believe it is. . . .sh. . . .

Woman's voice heard outside.

PHYLLIS

Yes, it is, as usual, she. . . .

Mrs. Peck rushes through the center door and pauses.

THE ECHO

MRS. PECK

Oh, still breakfasting.

Rushes over and kisses Mrs. D., who has begun to rise, and pushes her into her seat.

She speaks effusively in gasps. She is a short woman, with dark, attractive eyes, and manners which we generally call kittenish.

MRS. PECK

How are you? (*Kisses Phyllis.*) And you, dear? I'm so excited.

MRS. DOUGLAS

Excited?

MRS. PECK

Some of the troops are coming home today.

She sits down.

MRS. DOUGLAS

Troops? Today?

MRS. PECK

Yes, is it not splendid. Some of our own boys, marching up the street — well and happy.

MRS. DOUGLAS

Do you know what companies are returning? Is . . .

THE ECHO

MRS. PECK

No, dear, I don't think so. Only Bert Henderson's and Jeffrey's regiments are. . . .

PHYLLIS

Is not Charles' regiment returning? It went with Bert's.

MRS. PECK

I don't think it is coming. . . . No, it isn't.

MRS. DOUGLAS

I haven't heard for two months and I hoped. . . .

MRS. PECK

Poor dear. Don't worry. It will be over soon, now.

G. W. JONES, *Enters center door.*

Mr. Peck's waitin', Missus.

MRS. PECK

Oh, I forgot Archibald. I was afraid you would not be dressed — rushed up — forgot about him.

MRS. DOUGLAS, *to G. W. Jones.*

Tell Mr. Peck to come up, George.

G. W. JONES

Yes, missus. (*Exit G. W. Jones.*)

MRS. DOUGLAS

I, too, forgot something. Won't you have some coffee with us? Pardon me for not asking you immediately.

THE ECHO

MR. PECK

He is a tall, slim man about fifty years of age, twelve years older than his wife, with grey hair and side whiskers. His clothes are cut in the fashion of the time; he wears a top-hat, light grey trousers, a dark coat.

MR. PECK

Good morning, ladies.

MRS. DOUGLAS AND PHYLLIS

Good-morning.

MRS. DOUGLAS

Won't you be seated, Mr. Peck.

MR. PECK

Thank you.

MRS. DOUGLAS

I was just asking your wife to have some breakfast with us. Will you not have a bite?

MRS. PECK

No, thank you, dear. We have just breakfasted. Archibald makes such sumptuous muffins. (*Looks with ecstasy to the sky.*)

MR. PECK, *addressing Phyllis.*

And how is the little lady?

PHYLLIS

Not very different from yesterday, Mr. Big man. How is Mr. Big Man?

*

THE ECHO

MR. PECK

Quite well! Only a woman is privileged to change her mind and her malady each day. My gout remains incurable and troublesome, but I manage to get along.

MRS. DOUGLAS

I am sorry we kept you waiting, Mr. Peck.

MR. PECK

Don't mention it. This is no hour to call, but my wife insisted.

MRS. DOUGLAS

We were so engrossed in. . . .

MR. PECK

It makes no difference. (*Turns to his wife.*)
Out of sight, out of mind. No wonder our wives are so anxious for us to be out of sight.

They laugh slightly.

MRS. DOUGLAS

I have had my picture framed and have hung it in the other room. You remember it?

MR. PECK

Yes, indeed. Did you take the narrow frame?

MRS. DOUGLAS

Yes.

THE ECHO

MRS. PECK

Let us see it, please. (*Bounces up.*)

MRS. DOUGLAS, *rising.*

If you care to, and you, Mr. Peck?

MR. PECK

I should like to very much. (*They go out.*)

MRS. DOUGLAS

Excuse us just for a moment, Phyllis.

PHYLLIS

Certainly.

Enter G. W. Jones with two little girls in each hand.

G. W. JONES

Two ladies fo' yo', Miss Phyllis.

PHYLLIS, *rising.*

Who is it?

DAISY

Daisy is a little girl, four years old, who has golden curls down her back. Her blue eyes are her most distinctive feature; her voice is very babyish.

JANE

Jane is a dark haired girl, with black eyes and eyebrows with long black eyelashes. Her voice is somewhat more mature. She is five years old.

THE ECHO

DAISY AND JANE, *speak in unison.*

Us!

PHYLLIS

Us?

DAISY

It's me and Jane.

PHYLLIS

Daisy?

JANE

Yes.

They take her hands.

DAISY

Miss Phyllis, woldiers come home. . . . (*Exit G. W. Jones.*)

PHYLLIS

You don't remember when they left, do you!

JANE

I do, my brudder went.

DAISY

We have a picture of him.

PHYLLIS

You have? How nice.

JANE

Tell us a story, Miss Phyllis, about a big, big. . . .

THE ECHO

DAISY

And a little, li'lle, li'lle. . . .

PHYLLIS

Shall I tell you about a big Prince, and bigger giants, and a little Princess?

JANE

Pleath.

DAISY

Make it end nice.

PHYLLIS, *the children sit at her feet.*

Once upon a time there was a wonderful Prince. He was strong, and brave, and handsome. Wasn't he?

DAISY

Yeth.

PHYLLIS

It always depends on the point of view. . . . This Prince was anxious to kill bad giants, so he went away from his castle and killed bad men who steal little princesses and children. He left the song of birds, the song of leaves rustling in the gentle breeze, and the waving golden grain to fight. . . . to fight for good children and beautiful princesses.

DAISY

Why did he fight?

JANE

He wath brave. Wathn't he?

THE ECHO

PHYLLIS

Because he was brave, and because there was a Princess in a castle.

DAISY

Ah, he liked her.

PHYLLIS

He fell in love with her, but only in a dream.

JANE

He didn't fight in a dream.

PHYLLIS

No, he only loved in a dream. For her eyes were closed; she was asleep, as it were; a wicked fairy had closed her eyes a year before. He came into her dream; life was a dream — the dream of love. The Princess knew she would never awake; she knew his love was only pity; so she sent him away. She told him it was only a dream.

DAISY

But he came back.

PHYLLIS

No, he didn't. He fought. She dreamed. She often wanted to call him back. How she hated her sleep — how she hated the evil fairy who had closed her eyes.

JANE

But it must end nicely. He came back. Say yes, Miss Phyllis.

THE ECHO

PHYLLIS

To please you; yes, he came back.

MRS. PECK, *enters door with others.*

Yes, yes (*over her shoulder.*) Ah, dear, (*to Phyllis*) we left you all alone. (*Enter G. W. Jones center door.*)

PHYLLIS

But I had company. These little darlings have been entertaining me by letting me entertain them.

DAISY AND JANE

Good-bye.

PHYLLIS

Take them to the door, George. Good-bye, children. Stop in again, like good children. (*Exeunt center.*)

I don't mind being alone. Blindness and solitude are much akin.

MR. PECK

Verily, verily, I say, the little lady is a philosopher.

PHYLLIS

When one has nothing else to do one may as well be a philosopher. (*They laugh.*)

MRS. DOUGLAS

You are too hard on philosophers, Phyllis.

MR. PECK

On the contrary, it seems to me that. . . .

THE ECHO

MRS. PECK

Now don't argue. My husband, like all men, loves to argue. While they talk, we rule.

MR. PECK

My dear, don't be absurd. You know that it is the man's place to rule and the woman's to obey.

MRS. PECK

You will argue.

PHYLLIS

Will you excuse me; I think I shall lie down for a little while. (*Rises.*)

MRS. DOUGLAS

Shall I not go with you? (*rising.*)

PHYLLIS

No, thank you. I can find my way. Good-bye, Mr. Peck. Good-bye, Mrs. Peck.

MRS. PECK

Good-morning.

Simultaneously with

MR. PECK

Good-morning.

Mrs. Peck glares at Mr. P. He looks at carpet.

MRS. PECK, *after a momentary pause.*

Archibald, Mrs. Douglas told me the other day that old Mr. Jones is going to sell that beautiful horse he bought last spring. Won't you buy it?

THE ECHO

MR. PECK, *indifferently*.

Is that so?

MRS. DOUGLAS

We have our information from George.

MR. PECK

Suppose it's these hard times! This blasted war eats up our money, our food, our lives, everything. That's what comes of letting religious fanatics and political demagogues rule the country. Everything has been upset. Even that backwoodsman who is President has become disgusted with men who elected him.

MRS. PECK, *stentorian voice*.

Mr. Peck! A man with a face like Lincoln's, homely as he is, must be unfortunate, and not unwise. Besides in the South, sugar costs several dollars a pound; flour is forty dollars a barrel.

MR. PECK

Unfortunate? Unfortunate people are unwise. The trouble with Lincoln is not so much himself as the abolitionist crew supporting him. Horace Greeley said in "The Tribune" at the beginning of the war that we should "let the erring sisters go in peace." This is what Lincoln should have done. Why disturb everything to satisfy fanatics? Instead we have been forced into this; the war has not ended in three years though we thought it would end in three months.

THE ECHO

MRS. PECK

We were talking about the horse.

G. W. Jones enters.

MR. PECK, *coughing slightly.*

However politics are so interesting and. . . .

MRS. PECK

Not at all. You don't want to buy the horse for us.

Mrs. Douglas starts to read paper again.

MR. PECK

I should like to, but. . . .

MRS. PECK

But what?

MR. PECK

I can't afford it.

MRS. PECK

You talked about politics to avoid this matter.

MR. PECK

I did *not* change the conversation. You stated. . . .

MRS. PECK, *snappily.*

There's no use. I know.

MR. PECK

But, my dear, this is unreasonable.

MRS. PECK

Don't my dear me, sir.

THE ECHO

MR. PECK

You are so unreasonable, Mrs. Douglas. . . .

MRS. PECK

I unreasonable? I unreasonable? Brute! Here I am slaving for you, and this is the way I'm treated. Because. . . .

MR. PECK

Because what?

MRS. PECK

Because!

MR. PECK

Woman, woman, with thy because.

MRS. PECK

(Wiping away an imaginary tear looks at him out of the corner of her eye. He is extremely stiff, uncompromising, and troubled.)

You are more interested in politics than in me. You, you. . . . *(she blubbers, and sobs on her arm.)*
(He rises and walks about uncomfortably.)

MR. PECK

I'll buy the thing.

Mrs. Peck hops up and throws her arms around his neck, kisses him; and turns to Mrs. Douglas.

MRS. PECK

Isn't he a perfect angel?

MR. PECK, *snorting a little.*

Angel!

THE ECHO

MRS. PECK

I'll always do what you want dear. You shall have nice mince pie tonight. (*He smiles.*)

MRS. DOUGLAS

You must let me see your acquisition when you get it.

MRS. PECK

We will. Let us go and look at it now, Archibald.

MR. PECK

I suppose we may as well.

MRS. DOUGLAS

Don't forget your promise.

MR. PECK

I shall not, rest assured, Mrs. Douglas. (*Shaking hands.*)

MR. PECK

Good morning, Mrs. Douglas.

MRS. DOUGLAS

Good morning. Come again.

MR. PECK

Thank you.

MRS. PECK, *embracing Mrs. Douglas.*

Good-bye. Come over soon. Bye-bye.

Exit with G. W. Jones.

THE ECHO

MRS. DOUGLAS

Rises, goes to window. Shouting is heard on the street, martial music is accompanied by the tramp of feet. Mrs. Douglas runs out of center door. Phyllis enters room...Goes to window.)

PHYLLIS

Mother! Mother!

G. W. JONES, *enters.*

Missus went out, Miss Phyllis.

PHYLLIS

The troops have returned?

G. W. JONES

Soldiers marchin'. (*Looks out of windows.*)

PHYLLIS

I hope we may hear something about dad and the prince.

G. W. JONES

Prince! Prince! What's dat?

PHYLLIS

Except ye become as little children, ye cannot know.

G. W. JONES

De bible! Yo' member dat ole' rascal Peter, he used ter sing hymns lowder 'an anyone and steal chickens on his way home. Sho' I says at dat were wrong and he says, No sah. De bible, 'cause de

THE ECHO

preacher said so, de bible says: Seek and ye shall receive. . . . and the hungry were fed.

PHYLLIS

But the Bible refers to spiritual things. . . . Are there many troops, George?

G. W. JONES

Quite some, Miss Phyllis.

PHYLLIS

Do you know any?

G. W. JONES

No.

PHYLLIS

Is mother outside?

G. W. JONES

Yes.

G. W. JONES, *interestedly*.

Why dere's, dere's. . . . shu' nuff. . . .

PHYLLIS, *quickly*.

Who? Who is it?

G. W. JONES

Freddy Jackson. Marchin' proud as kin be.

PHYLLIS, *listlessly*.

Oh.

She goes and sits down.

THE ECHO

G. W. JONES

Suddenly gets excited and rushes out.

PHYLLIS, *after a moment.*

Hasn't mother come back? She will catch cold, or did she take my cape. . . . George, I say, hasn't mother Oh he's gone. . . .

She smiles and lightly laughs.

Noise on the stairs. G. W. Jones throws open door with a loud "Yea!" Mr. and Mrs. Douglas enter and stand near the door.

Mr. Douglas is a man about forty years of age who looks younger however. He is in fine physical condition, rather thin but strong and vigorous. His face is beaming; he is clad in a soiled corporal's uniform.

G. W. JONES

Massa's back. . . .

Simultaneously with

Your father, Phyllis.

Phyllis turns to them. Father opens his arms.

MR. DOUGLAS

Phyllis?

PHYLLIS, *with a sob.*

Father!

Mr. Douglas goes forward to take her into his arms when Charles appears.

THE ECHO

He is a young man about twenty-five or six years old, wearing a faded blue uniform which is adorned by a silver medal for bravery.

CHARLES

Phyllis!

Mr. Douglas turns around. Phyllis starts, hides her face in her arms, sways for a moment, and is caught by Mr. Douglas and Charles, who put her in a chair.

MR. DOUGLAS

George, hurry and get Dr. Mapes. . . . (*Exit G. W. J.*) Mother, a little cold water or spirits of ammonia.

MRS. DOUGLAS

Right away. (*Exit Mrs. Douglas at left.*)

Charles and Mr. Douglas rub her hands.

CHARLES

Too much of a shock.

MR. DOUGLAS

Yes.

CHARLES

Hardly any need of sending for a doctor: will be over in a minute.

MR. DOUGLAS

Best to be safe.

CHARLES

Yes.

THE ECHO

Enter Mrs. Douglas.

MRS. DOUGLAS

Here is some water and some spirits. (*She bathes Phyllis' head with a wet handkerchief.*)

Enter G. W. J. with Dr. Mapes.

DR. MAPES, *goes immediately to Phyllis.*

Happened to be outside. What's the matter? George blubbered so much confused nonsense I couldn't understand. A shock?

MR. DOUGLAS

My unexpected return home.

DR. MAPES

She will be all right in a minute.

Phyllis starts to open her eyes: closes them: calls weakly.

PHYLLIS

Mother.

MRS. DOUGLAS

Yes, dear.

PHYLLIS, *in a loud whisper.*

I am afraid. I can see. Mother, I saw.

MRS. DOUGLAS

Yes, dear. (*Turns to Dr. Mapes.*)
She must be delirious.

THE ECHO

PHYLLIS

Delirious? . . . No, mother. I feel weak, but before . . . I saw . . . shadows . . . light . . . confusion.

DR. MAPES

It may be. Close the blinds please, and leave the room — the nervous tension must be relaxed.

They go out — at left.

DR. MAPES

I shall call you in a minute. . . . (*To Phyllis.*) Do you feel better?

PHYLLIS

Yes.

DR. MAPES

Can you see?

PHYLLIS

Yes, but everything is indistinct.

DR. MAPES, *goes to door, after examining her eyes.*

The young lady's sight has been restored. You remember I said it might happen. The blindness was caused by nervousness.

Enter the Col. and Mrs. Douglas. She kneels in front of Phyllis.

Phyllis?

PHYLLIS

Mother. You are there? (*Feels her.*) I hardly dare touch you, I fear all will slip away.

THE ECHO

DR. MAPES

We must take good care of our invalid.

MR. DOUGLAS

Yes. *(Looks at Phyllis and comes near her.)*

DR. MAPES

I suggest that you get a specialist, Dr. Holt, to examine her eyes, and in the meanwhile keep your rooms in semi-darkness, and let Miss Douglas use dark glasses.

MR. DOUGLAS

I shall send George — no I'll go myself and bring Dr. Holt with me. *(Goes to Phyllis.)* My darling. What a joy.

PHYLLIS

Father. I feel like crying. *(Silence for a moment.)*

MRS. DOUGLAS

We should go now. I will go with you. Dr. Mapes will stay here until we return, won't you, sir?

DR. MAPES

With pleasure.

MR. DOUGLAS

For a few minutes, good-bye.

MRS. DOUGLAS

Good-bye dear. Rest a little. Thank you, doctor.

Exit.

THE ECHO

PHYLLIS

Doctor?

DR. MAPES

Yes?

PHYLLIS

Is anyone in the parlor?

DR. MAPES

Why yes. I think I noticed someone when I left my coat there. It may have been George. . . hurried so. Hardly know.

PHYLLIS

I think Charles was there.

DR. MAPES, *significantly*.

Oh. (*Pause — very short.*)

PHYLLIS

Won't you let me see him, just for a minute?

DR. MAPES

M'm, yes — but there must be no excitement.

PHYLLIS

I promise. Indeed I shall be so quiet you need not chaperone us.

DR. MAPES

I was about to remark that I must run next door and tell my wife not to expect me for lunch.

THE ECHO

PHYLLIS

You are a diplomat, Doctor Mapes.

DR. MAPES

That is half of a physician's work. Remember your promise. No high tragedy or emotion.

PHYLLIS

No, I promise. (*Exit Dr. Mapes. Enter Charles.*)

CHARLES

Phyllis!

PHYLLIS

Charles! You know?

CHARLES

Yes. . . . it's true. . . .

PHYLLIS

It is! (*Opens her eyes.*) Charles. . . . it is you. I can see you. . . . I remember you. . . . four years ago. . . .

CHARLES

Phyllis, Phyllis, how often I have thought of you. I have been through the Shenandoah, chasing the rebels in their mad raids; I have tramped in bare feet through the snow and the mud, slept in the open, seen my comrades rot away on the battle field. I've starved and been wounded, but the vision of you has never faded. When I wished I were dead, when it all seemed a mad, horrible dream, the thought of you has

THE ECHO

strengthened me. . . . When I have thought of you, I have found a new meaning in life.

PHYLLIS

You have suffered Charles?

CHARLES

More than I can tell you. I have wanted sweets; I have wanted love and gentleness. Oh there were times when I felt I was saving the world from slavery and I took pleasure in the most diabolical cruelty against which I revolted in my sober moments. I thought at times to win fame and honor by the torments and destructions of Hell, but when I thought of you, my courage seemed mean and cheap; mere selfish avarice.

PHYLLIS, *smiling a little.*

The same eloquent Charles.

CHARLES

As always, only eloquent to you.

PHYLLIS

Still moved by pity, Charles, eh?

CHARLES

No! Now that you can see, why should I pity you? (*Sits gloomily in chair opposite her.*) I am the one to be pitied.

PHYLLIS

That is absurd.

THE ECHO

CHARLES

Absurd? I shall tell you something rather absurd. In camp we used to talk about your sex in a more or less joking way, and one of my comrades suggested that there are four types of woman, subjectively considered, from a masculine view-point.

PHYLLIS, *Charles rises and paces floor.*

You have never joked before when proposing to me. It proves that your love has flown with your pity.

CHARLES

Just a minute. It's not entirely a joke. The four types are those to which one is indifferent, those with whom one would like to be pals, those who are physically attractive, and those one feels like protecting. You are all of these except the first. (*Kneels before her.*) But you are the fifth type, you defy classification. Phyllis, Phyllis, Phyllis, let us end this nonsense. . . . You love me. . . . I know you do. . . . let us marry. . . .

PHYLLIS, *she rises.*

I do not know what to think.

CHARLES

Let me think for you.

Martial music and shouting are heard. Phyllis looks at Charles and smiles. He embraces her.

PHYLLIS

Whereas I was blind I now see. . . All is light. . .
God is good. . . .

THE ECHO

Kisses her.

CHARLES

Listen. . . . music. . . . it's an echo. . . . of when I
left. . . . but now it's glad. . . . all wars are echoes of
other wars.

PHYLLIS

Charles.

CHARLES

Phyllis.

CURTAIN.

DEATH SPEAKS

A FANTASY

Preface

The didactic, intellectual, philosophical aspect of death, and the negative, static point of view in particular, are cloaked in the peculiar guise of the dramatic situation of a ghost rising out of a grave, in the dead of night, and speaking with a Priest about the life of the individual and of society. The situation symbolizes life and death, facing one another. In the dialogue there is indicated a note of failure for life, but at the end the crowing of the rooster and the dawn of day indicate that by rebirth, by renewal, and by reconsecration, life triumphs over death.

A funeral march played before the rise of the curtain will add to the force of the situation, as will complete darkness for a few moments before the curtain rises.

DRAMATIS PERSONAE

THE PRIEST
DEATH

TIME.

Three O'clock in the Morning
Summer

PLACE

A Country Churchyard

Death Speaks

The darkness is intense. It is difficult to see the trees which stand like sentinels behind, and on the sides of a white raised slab covering a grave. A small wooden cross stands at the foot of it. The sound of footsteps is heard, and a priest walks towards the grave. The stone (which the stage carpenter has made of card-board), opens like the leaf of a book. The priest stops and wipes the perspiration from his head. Out of the grave arises a skeleton's head, and a figure, vaguely seen, is draped in white.

THE PRIEST

A nightmare!

DEATH, *speaks slowly, with deep sonorous voice.*

No. 'Tis death.

THE PRIEST

Death?

DEATH

Yes.

THE PRIEST

What are you?

DEATH

I am nothing. I am the eternal negative; the perpetual opposition. What is life?

DEATH SPEAKS

THE PRIEST

Life is existence.

DEATH

There are two kinds of existence. I am existence. Life is existence. The one is growth; the other's decay.

THE PRIEST

Are you really death?

DEATH

I am your past. The present in the future becomes your past. I am the haunting yesterday, and the future someday. I am the ultimate.

THE PRIEST

You must be old, or is the ultimate, is death, incompatible with time?

DEATH

It is.

THE PRIEST

You are the past ages?

DEATH

I am.

THE PRIEST

What do you think of our modern cities as compared with the ancient?

DEATH SPEAKS

DEATH

Life is the beautiful thing. Everything living has beauty. Only the dead and dying is ugly. So your cities have the beauty of life. But the noise, the dirt, and the unsightly, inartistic conglomeration of stone, mortar and steel make your modern cities inferior in beauty to the harmonious architecture of noble Athens and Rome.

THE PRIEST

The large populations of our modern cities are a great deal responsible for their construction.

But you must admit that society is much further advanced than it was in ancient days. Democracy is a mighty lever of progress. For example, slavery exists no more.

DEATH

Chattel slavery exists no more. Consequently the very exceptional man has a chance to elevate himself. But do not deceive yourself about the abolition of slavery. Millions of men are still in bondage, fettered by economic and social ties. They work for the barest necessities of life. Poverty is the blackest social cancer in your modern life. It makes your Progress a hollow paradox.

THE PRIEST

You forget the blessings of democracy, with its rule by the majority.

DEATH

The majority rule? Where. . . . Your political

DEATH SPEAKS

leaders, your sons who inherit influence, your economic and social leaders dominate and control your politics. Your vaunted democracy is an aristocracy, split into two factions, each controlling its part of the people. The actual majority is the majority of the aristocracy. Not until you have an equality of wealth, of genius, and of intelligence through-out the body-politic will you have democracy. Mind, I do not say that your aristocracy is not the best form of government for the present, but do not call it the rule of the majority. Do not call it popular rule through an aristocracy. Call it a democracy by the manipulation of the people.

THE PRIEST

You are indeed the eternal negative. You will admit, I suppose, that our aristocracy is more directly in control than it used to be, and that it is wider in its actual sphere and its susceptibility to popular influence.

DEATH

I admit this. I admit it is the best government, politically considered, under the circumstances.

THE PRIEST

Perhaps you will also concede that life is happier for individuals nowadays.

DEATH

I do not. Happiness depends primarily on the disposition of the individual. One could be as happy in Rome as in New York. Insofar as society deter-

DEATH SPEAKS

mines happiness, I have already intimated that your modern society sucks out the vitality of your modern laborer, just as the cities of antiquity were built on the wasted bodies of the slave. You have poverty; you have starvation; your children are driven to work; you compel your women to sell their bodies and their souls. You let your slaves live in filth, cold and privation. You enslave foreigners under the names of colonization, expansion, and progress. You fill your prisons with human derelicts, many of whom you create. You prohibit murder, and practice capital punishment. You allow the corners of your streets to be used for saloons, and prohibit drunkenness; you allow dens of gambling to exist and prohibit gambling; you sometimes punish solicitors and do not close houses of prostitution. You provide expert legal prosecution, but leave the defense of accused persons who are poor in the hands of incompetent attorneys.

THE PRIEST

Unfortunately there is a black side of society. Why not look at the bright side? In fact this is a duty, for man errs by his own volition perhaps more often than he is driven to it. Look at the large middle-class and the upper classes.

DEATH

Here the scene is just as bad. Grovelling middle-class mediocrity stumbles along under the same burdens and falls into the same pitfalls as the lower class. As for the higher class it is simply immoral.

DEATH SPEAKS

It uses morals to suit its own purposes; its scruples are expediency, and its principles are a mere cloak of its purposes. The upper class is the knowing, and the middle-class the unwitting slave driver. The mediocre middle-class generally only seeks a comfortable livelihood. Ambition for fame, power, or fortune may move the upper class. Neither class is anxious to serve the world. They do not want to better the lot of man. They move selfishly in the narrow rut of their daily routine. The meaning of love is spelled in decorous marriage. The meaning of thought is spelled in the conventional platitudes and dogma. The exalted spirituality of love, and the critically intelligent survey of the world are missing.

THE PRIEST

Do you blame me? Do you blame my church, or any church?

DEATH

I blame no one. I assert. The cause of the evils of the world is the weak will and the blundering stupidity of this middle-headed world. The churches, schools, the lawyers, physicians, and the political leaders, the magnets of finance and the leaders of industry, the statesmen, diplomats, the judges, the labor-leaders, the philosophers and editors are all blamed. It is not by negative, but by positive influences that the world advances. The positive is the only real program of real progress. The positive is the outgrowth of strong will and clear intelligence. I am opposed to the dynamic. I am opposed to intelli-

DEATH SPEAKS

gence. I am opposed to will, and to the positive, for I — I am Death.

THE PRIEST

You are the static.

DEATH

I am the static.

THE PRIEST, *with an agonized cry.*

Vanity, vanity, all is vanity. I may as well kill myself. (*Grabs his throat.*)

The stage is dark for a moment. The ghost disappears; the grave is covered. Afar is heard the crowing of a rooster; the sky gets lighter, with a pink tinge in it. The Priest is sitting on the grave.

THE PRIEST, *stretching his arms to the sky.*

Die? No. I will not. . . . It is morning. . . . a new day — the resurrection. . . . the dynamic morning sunlight re-vitalizes life. . . . Death skulks away.

CURTAIN

THE INTANGIBLE

A ONE ACT DRAMA

Preface

For the original suggestion of this short drama, the author is indebted to the description by his cousin, Mr. Ove Götzsche, of a snake in Cuba which kills itself by violently smashing its body against a tree or the earth. Such a theme is papably a fine analogy of some human lives. After considering many lives to which it might be applicable, the life of crass materialism, which amounts to degeneracy, seemed the most unusual and the most striking subject. Moreover an extreme case ending in death indicates the general tendency of society. Everything is bartered. Human souls are thrown on the counters of the mart. Values are often topsy-turvey.

The friendly insistence by Brander Matthews that "there must be a strong conflict of will for intense interest by the audience" has had great influence in moulding the character of the leading figure, through which the conflict has been developed. With the words of this authoritative critic in his ears, the author rewrote the dialogue of "The Intangible."

DRAMATIS PERSONAE

MR. JOHN CURREN

WILLIAM BARLOW

JANE

MISS HELEN JOHNSON

TIME

The Present

SCENE

In New York City

The Intangible

In a comfortable library chair sits a gentleman of sixty-five years of age. His most prominent characteristics are a slight fringe of grey hair, deeply-lined features, and pale blue eyes. After further scrutiny we see that his square jaw seems to be infirm; his face has a pale, ashen look, reflecting recent sickness. He is dressed in a tuxedo, and a smoking jacket is slung over his shoulders, which are slightly stooped.

He is lost in thought; a book is half open on the floor beside his chair. On the table at the other side of the room is a library table which is covered with papers and periodicals. Neither the yellow-shaded floor-lamp near the sofa, nor the green-stained parlor lamp are lit. Only the glowing logs in the fire-place cast their fitful light on his face. The pale moonlight coming through the window at the other side of the room, enables us dimly to discern the table, a few chairs, heavy carpets on the floor, a number of book-cases, a couple of oil-paintings, mahogany paneled walls, and heavy rafters in the ceiling. The old gentleman lights a cigarette.

MR. JOHN CURREN, calling with a dominant, strong, voice.

Er — er — Say! Say!

He gets up and walks across the room with a somewhat uncertain step leaning rather heavily on a cane.

THE INTANGIBLE

MR. JOHN CURREN

Hello! Barlow! Barlow!

WILLIAM BARLOW

He appears at the door to our left of the room. The bright light which falls on him reveals a slightly built young man, about twenty-five or twenty-eight years of age. He enters with a pad in his hand.

WILLIAM BARLOW

Yes, sir.

MR. JOHN CURREN

Oh the devil! Are you there?

WILLIAM BARLOW

Not the devil. It's Barlow.

MR. JOHN CURREN

Impudence — you kid.

WILLIAM BARLOW

Self-defense, sir.

MR. JOHN CURREN

Go home to your mother.

WILLIAM BARLOW

If you will excuse my saying it, sir, the doctor said that under —

MR. JOHN CURREN

Enough — enough.

THE INTANGIBLE

WILLIAM BARLOW

The doctor said you must not smoke.

MR. JOHN CURREN

Damn the doctor!

WILLIAM BARLOW

And kill yourself.

MR. JOHN CURREN

More impudence. I can't stand you kids. Take your hat and coat.

WILLIAM BARLOW

You don't mean. . . .

MR. JOHN CURREN

Go. Get out!

WILLIAM BARLOW

Yes, sir.

William Barlow goes to the door, — pauses a moment, — turns around, — Mr. John Curren does not look at him, but gazes at the ceiling, with a harsh, cynical smile on his face, — Barlow goes out, closing the door behind him. After a moment there is heard the sound of another door slamming. Curren walks to the window, then goes to the other door, to the door near the window, and calls:

MR. JOHN CURREN

Jane. Come here. Hurry.

THE INTANGIBLE

JANE, *off-stage*.

Yes sir. Right away.

MR. JOHN CURREN

Not right away. Now! I say. . . .

JANE

Here I am.

She is a neatly dressed maid, with all the charm of youth and beauty.

MR. JOHN CURREN

Get Barlow. He just went out the front door. Tell him I'll have him arrested if he doesn't return immediately. He has stolen my cigarette case.

JANE, *suddenly weeping*.

Oh, no sir. He wouldn't do that. He, he. . . .

MR. JOHN CURREN

Ye Gods. You're not married are you?

JANE

No, but, but. . . .

MR. JOHN CURREN

Get him, if you expect to marry a free man.

JANE

Yes, Sir.

She goes out.

MR. JOHN CURREN, *calls out to her*.

Bring him to me.

THE INTANGIBLE

He goes to the window. He looks out, apprehensively tapping his cane. Then he smiles, sits down, and reads a book, lighting the table lamp.

JANE

Here he is, sir.

MR. JOHN CURREN

H'm.

WILLIAM BARLOW

I'd like to know what you mean by threatening my arrest. You old rascal, if you were not a sick old man I'd throw this trashy cigarette case at you.

He throws it on the easy chair.

MR. JOHN CURREN

H'm.

WILLIAM BARLOW

What?

MR. JOHN CURREN

You forgot my letters.

WILLIAM BARLOW

I don't care about your letters.

MR. JOHN CURREN

Enough. Bring me my mail.

WILLIAM BARLOW

But I tell you. . . .

THE INTANGIBLE

MR. JOHN CURREN

And I tell you I want my mail.

WILLIAM BARLOW

But. . . .

MR. JOHN CURREN

Bring it. Take off your coat.

WILLIAM BARLOW

I won't. . . .

MR. JOHN CURREN

Don't waste more time.

WILLIAM BARLOW

Oh, well if you won't. . . .

MR. JOHN CURREN

Get it done, stop talking.

WILLIAM BARLOW

Very well, sir.

He goes out. Jane has been nervously twitching her apron.

MR. JOHN CURREN, *to Jane.*

You are — er interested in Barlow?

JANE

Yes, I — I — like Will.

THE INTANGIBLE

MR. JOHN CURREN

H'm, so I guessed. I suppose he said he didn't steal my case.

JANE

Yes, sir. He was very angry. For my sake, as well as his own, he said.

MR. JOHN CURREN

For your sake? How like a man! . . . Well, he didn't steal it; I simply said that to bring him back.

JANE

I'm so glad. You do trust him, Mr. Curren.

MR. JOHN CURREN

Trust? Oh, yes. I trust him. He's as good as any other rascal.

JANE

Rascal?

MR. JOHN CURREN

Oh, angel — angel — that's all.

JANE

Thank you sir. (*She goes out. He sits down in front of fire-place. William Barlow enters.*)

WILLIAM BARLOW

Mr. Curren.

MR. JOHN CURREN

H'm?

THE INTANGIBLE

WILLIAM BARLOW

A lady insists on seeing you.

MR. JOHN CURREN

Her name.

WILLIAM BARLOW

She won't give her name.

MR. JOHN CURREN

Huh?

WILLIAM BARLOW

I don't know.

MR. JOHN CURREN

Young or old?

WILLIAM BARLOW

Young.

MR. JOHN CURREN

As good looking as Jane? Or isn't Jane good-looking.

WILLIAM BARLOW, *quickly*.

Certainly Jane is beautiful — beautiful: Why, sir, there isn't a prettier girl in New York than Jane.

MR. JOHN CURREN

H'm, but this other —

WILLIAM BARLOW

Oh, yes sir.

THE INTANGIBLE

MR. JOHN CURREN

Put her out.

WILLIAM BARLOW

She says we will have to use brute force to put her out.

MR. JOHN CURREN

Call the police.

WILLIAM BARLOW

But she looks like a lady.

MR. JOHN CURREN

All the more reason.

WILLIAM BARLOW

She says it is a personal matter.

MR. JOHN CURREN

Only personal matters interest women. . . .

A young woman, unmistakably a lady, about twenty one years of age, dressed in a tailored black suit, stands in the door.

MISS HELEN JOHNSON

Excuse me. Is this Mr. Curren?

MR. JOHN CURREN

What!

MISS HELEN JOHNSON

This is, I presume, Mr. Curren.

THE INTANGIBLE

MR. JOHN CURREN

How dare you.

MISS HELEN JOHNSON

Very well, I shall go.

She turns to go.

MR. JOHN CURREN

No! Stop! Get out, Barlow.

MISS HELEN JOHNSON

I pity Mr. Barlow. Get out. (*She laughs.*)

MR. JOHN CURREN

What do you want?

MISS HELEN JOHNSON

Justice.

MR. JOHN CURREN

Justice? A reformer.

MISS HELEN JOHNSON

Unfortunately, not a reformer.

MR. JOHN CURREN

Fortunately. Only the weak are reformers.

MISS HELEN JOHNSON

Only the strong need reforming.

MR. JOHN CURREN

H'm. . . . Well?

THE INTANGIBLE

MISS HELEN JOHNSON

I come to ask you to make a decent settlement for my father's death.

MR. JOHN CURREN

Speak to my lawyer.

MISS HELEN JOHNSON

I ask for justice — not for law.

MR. JOHN CURREN

Reform the law.

MISS HELEN JOHNSON

I am not a reformer.

MR. JOHN CURREN

H'm.

MISS HELEN JOHNSON

Mr. Curren. In these times, when the world is straining and giving up its life, the great profits you ordinarily make are multiplied. My father went as captain of one of your ships. It went under, and the crew was lost. I think it a simple matter of justice to ask you to take a part of your tremendous earnings and give to my mother, only a small part. I can support myself, but she deserves to be treated justly.

Mr. Curren rises and looks at her for the first time. He starts.

THE INTANGIBLE

MR. JOHN CURREN, *agitatedly*.

Who are you? Sit down!

He lights the lamps.

MISS HELEN JOHNSON

Thank you.

He turns and looks at her.

MR. JOHN CURREN

Who are you? God but. . . . who are you. . . . your mother. . . . I say. . . .

MISS HELEN JOHNSON

My mother is the wife of the late Captain Johnson.

MR. JOHN CURREN

Her home. . . . her family. . . . who was she?

MISS HELEN JOHNSON

Her name was Helen Navaard; she used to live, before she was married, in Maine.

MR. JOHN CURREN, *sits in chair.*

MR. JOHN CURREN

Helen. . . . Helen. . . . You are the picture of her. . . .

MISS HELEN JOHNSON

You know my mother?

MR. JOHN CURREN

No, but I knew her.

THE INTANGIBLE

MISS HELEN JOHNSON

You knew her?

MR. JOHN CURREN

When I was a little fellow, in the town where I was born, a small hamlet down East, there was a little girl I took out in my catboat. When I got a little older, I knew I could only love her. I went to the city to make my fortune. After five years in Boston, I returned. She had gone. They told me she had married a first mate on a steamer. I went back to my work.

MISS HELEN JOHNSON

You were Jim-Jams?

MR. JOHN CURREN

Jim-Jams? She used to call me that. Jim-Jams. . . Jim-Jams. . . . Has she been happy?

MISS HELEN JOHNSON

Very. She thought you had forgotten about her. For a couple of years she felt badly, but then she was reconciled. Why didn't you write?

MR. JOHN CURREN

Why? Why. . . . I hated to write. . . . I wanted to wait until I had succeeded, and. . . . I didn't know how much I loved her till I heard she was gone.

Here's a check. Here, here. Before I forget it. . . . Let me see you. You look so much like my Helen.

THE INTANGIBLE

MISS HELEN JOHNSON

We did not know you were the Mr. Curren mother knew. She is not very well. Have you been. . . been happy?

MR. JOHN CURREN, *he rises.*

Happy? (*A wild laugh.*) Do I look it? Let me tell you about my life. In Cuba there is a snake which kills itself. It hits its body, its head against a tree, the ground, or anything at hand until it is finally dead. So there is a point where money means only a vague sense of power to a man, where it does not add an iota to his comfort or his strength; where it becomes a dead weight. But he does not cast off the dead weight. He struggles on with it; an intangible desire makes him kill himself for this hollow aim.

Here I am. Does not this weak and lonely old man speak before he has opened his lips? Does not this cold prison speak for itself? There are no loving hands here. . . no children's laughter, no kind voices. There is only the vision of the grave. . . the grave. . .

He sits in chair in a relaxed position.

Say good-by, for me. . . to Helen. . . my love. . . Love is the richest pearl in the dark folds of life. . . Keep it. . . and God. . .

CURTAIN

A BIT O' VERSE

A mite o'life
 To live,
A speck o'thought
 To weigh,
A ghost o'dreams
 To see,
A bit o'verse
 To read.

A Bit o' Verse

VIVO

O Muse! with sacred laurel crown my brow,
The Bacchian ivy from Aonia's Mount
Be wreathed by fair Eulalia's tender grace;
May Orpheus touch my heart's vibrating chords
To draw from them the richest notes of life
As strains of music roused Inferno's King.
My message shall not pine away distressed
Like Echo loving blind Narcissus cold.

Mine eyes are lifted to the hills to see
Whence man did come, and why and whence life's
course
Decreed by Parca's Fates doth loom
Before the favored creatures on this swirling earth;
For Reason with her weakness is the queen
Who wields a sceptre over intellect.
As far as human eye can see, the stars
Are moving in their courses; Janus laughs,
Diana smiles; the mystic curtains shroud
From sight innumerable cycling orbs of fire.
Is human weakness defying man
To rob the grave of terror's morbid fears,
Investing life with wished import, though false,
And holding o'er man's head a moral sword?
Or did the wondrous One Supreme, that e'er

A BIT O' VERSE

Doth lurk amid the stars and earthly force,
Create mankind like self, exalting man.
Man comprehends in part the universe,
While rivers flow and mountains rise and fall
But they do neither see nor understand.
The mind is that distinctive faculty
Of man's existant; 'tis sublimity!
This strange earth journey is a walk in paths
That wind in canyons lined on either side
By stony walls that limit human sight.
A chasm starts and ends the way, it drops
Away to regions writ on fancy's scroll.
We wander here peculiarly without
Expressed desire; beginning, being, end,
Alike, are milestones on the road of life.

This slight life's flame burns, flutters, dies for aye,
But verity maintains its poignancy;
Exalted far above the physical
The truth's an ideal goal that's fixed in worth;
Steadfast devotion to the ideal life,
Consisting in a fabric wove complete
Of those strange threads entwining life,
Is to be sought, since it conduces straight
To progress, joy, and wealth, for self and man.
In annals where the bravest deeds are found
They are the tales when right and wrong combat
Upon the moral plane, where truth unfurls
A million streaming flags of victory.
The true which lies within our hearts should be
Opposed to bad and fleeting whims and tastes;

A BIT O' VERSE

The principles of right more precious are
Than life's cold shell: the soul and truth are twins.

The greatest truth of life is that thou art,
That through thy veins creation's flute doth play,
That thou can'st say to being's author "No!
I will not live and play my part in life,"
Or, better still, "I'll do my part to make
Complete the great creative work of nature."

Fair Hebe sits enthroned in fields where play
Gay Nais in clear stream and fount, as song
And Satyrs' dances sound their carefree notes.
Before her feet the hostages of Pan
Are richly spread with gifts of earthdom's sprites.
Queen Mab deluges youth with dreams of worlds
Not built awaiting thought and work by *men*.
Youths' visions of the morrow's promise bright
May well be cherished by the world as hope.
Youth! Cast not thou the richest pearl of time
Before low swine, for youth is fleeting; time,
The strong inexorable force, consumes in life's
Odd crucible the season's brightest gem.
The sky of grey is strangely lit
As golden beams pour from the East
Into the West, suffusing it with light —
Morn kisses Nature with her gentle warmth.
The tiny plant in darkness born grows up,
Its petal arms extending to enfold
The sunlight in embrace, and gaze enrapt
Upon the beauty of the sky and earth.
From darkness of the intellect, the soul

A BIT O' VERSE

Aroused to seek the light of love and truth,
Awakes and finds itself, o'erflooding life.
The leaves e'en of a kind are not alike
But Spring's impulse has common properties,
For by her mystic touch the leaves unfold
Revealing similar affinities;
So youth, with its distinctive qualities,
With one accord is glad to loosen all
The dormant powers waiting to be used,
To exercise potential faculties
Stored up from ages faded into night.
Rich treasures hid within the frame are found;
So, rising to bear Ge's burdens, youth desires
To try the strength and use the powers that are
Inert and undeveloped faculties.
But in the ecstasy of life and strength,
There is a tendency to let the light
Of temporal pleasures and present merriment
Outshine the graver things that duty holds;
And duty urges victory in life
As strife doth rage within the heart wherein
Are forces of defeat or victory;
Not conquering, but striving, gives life zest.
Youth does not readily yield things at hand,
For future triumphs that demand trained strength.
Completeness ought to cast its beacon light
Across the dullness of the flat plateau
Of life that stretches into future days —
A mountain, lost in the highest misty clouds,
But giving life a purpose and an aim.
'Tis not sufficient that the pow'rs of man

A BIT O' VERSE

Should be developed; they must aim so that
Unswerving they shall strike achievement e'en
As arrows from the bow of Procius
Straight-pierced Cephalus on her jealous watch.

The promised bride of ev'ry heart is she
Whose suitors court her smile in varied ways;
The hand of Happiness we all desire,
'Tis strange that She should hold a paradox
Of wish and task, like jewels and dirt, confused.
She is not transient joy or luxury,
But repose of the soul, contented, which
Is gained by fullest exercise of pow'rs.
The joy of self-expression is unmatched;
Not e'en the student's retrospection is
As pleasant as this glad activity.
Sweet nectar flowing o'er life's golden cup,
Thy taste appeases dryness of my heart;
O shades of light that color life with hues
That brightly garb the drear and blank with shades;
Appreciation of those things that lead
In the account of man to happiness,
Enfolds the nude in gorgeous draperies.
Excess cannot produce content,
A pile of stuff is powerless to wing
The spirit chained to barren, rocky waste.
There is a scale of fate which balances
The Cynic life with that of happiness;
Our duty and joys, like smiles and tears, are hung,
As day and night weigh down the scales of life.
Great burdens, gifts, and talents cannot be borne,
With tranquil heart and even mind except

A BIT O' VERSE

By strong and noble character that is
Undazzled by the sham and hypocrite.
Responsibility draws forth the strength
That's coiled like inert forest snakes that seem
A lifeless and impotent mass of earth
Until aroused, when demons vivify their sting.

The call of service sounds its clarion note,
To those who live in life's midday or eve';
And chance's billows beating on life's shore
With mighty currents throw their challenge bold
To latent faculties of youth to face
The storm-clouds, tempest or the driving rain.
As busy shepherds in the clover fields
Of life's green pastures, let us live and work
To tend our flocks with care and diligence,
With full appreciation of the sun,
And flowers, touched by colors light and deep.
The principles that men do entertain
Are those dynamic forces guiding them;
Men's actions are expressions of abstract
Beliefs that consciously, or not, are held;
In order is discernible the truth
And harmony with law, for order is
The end of action guided by the truth.
Beauty is lost when scars of moral fall
Do indicate a disregard of law;
The handsome is the perfect love and truth,
For Venus sees her beauty mirrored clear
In quiet pools along the dusty road.
The superficial truth is loud like brooks

A BIT O' VERSE

That tumble noisily along their way;
Eternal verities more silently
And potently as to the sea they flow.
The cataracts that toss us into truth
Are in ourselves, where nature's conscience speaks.
Whate'er the place assigned by destiny,
There is a spark of light within each soul
Which smoulders though the Hell of Man enfolds
It in its grasp, — devoid of sympathy.

The seasons come and go; day gilds the sky
'Till ev'ning's shadows wrap Aurora's form
In heavy mantle of protecting dark;
The lark trills a morning carol gay in notes
That flutter on the muffled breezes stirred
By upward flight to meet the morning sun;
The cricket plays its drowsy melody
Beneath the moon; youth pulsates in the mind
And body; soon 'tis stagnant; then 'tis dead.
Spring's spirit, which is rebirth of the soul,
Lives on undaunted by the years gone by,
For while the stream of love flows on,
It does not fade nor lose its luster bright.
Storm-clouds of death, that gather with the years;
The cold and frost of winter's blasts, the gloom
Of ev'ning's grim and grayly tinted shades,
Are dew-drops 'neath the sun of truth and love.
As duty is for youth development,
Maturity should consecrate its pow'rs;
Thus these do constitute the real success,
Which men pursue in different ways and modes.

A BIT O' VERSE

Life is eternity, for when the vale
Of shadows swept by Ælus from the loins
Of death's Black Prince, doth loom before this life,
The earthly qualities ennobling man
Like goodness, hope and love, are blurred in mist,
E'en though our hands do try to tear aside
The veil of space which hides the pow'r called God
And find man's place amid the starry spheres.
The great experience is life — not death;
Employed and exercised life's magnified.
When shall a man more restful be than when
His tired eyes close in that last long sleep
From which we know no waking, recalling now
The days of busy sowing, happy gain.
So as the flow'rs bedeck his corpse at rest,
The dictum that the world shall make with praise
Shall crown his work with worthy epitaph:
Here was a soul.

TOMORROW

Methinks of a day that I dreamed —
A day when my heart should sing,
As birds their sweet tunes haply chirp,
And brooks a low melody sound.

It was to be bright and aglow,
Like radiance poured from the sun
Suffusing all nature with light —
Ah! 'twas to be perfectly spent.

A BIT O' VERSE

What odd thoughts my reveries crowd!
What pictures illumine these moods!
The past and present play tag
As fancy reads destiny's fate.

LOST DREAMS

The leaves of autumn fall and rot;
The light of day fades into night,
Men die; the nation falls; life ends;
Dreams conjured by my hopes are lost.

The perfect day betakes its way
Absorbed by misty rain which falls
From storm-driv'n clouds of darkest gloom;
The perfect day is lost for aye.

For time flits by on winged foot,
Once lost it ne'er can be recalled;
But memories of faded dreams
Persist in lingering 'till death.

FALLEN IDOLS

Those idols you have learned
To kneel before and kiss
Should be destroyed; torn down.

So let your spirit free,
Knock down the idol; break
The Mirror! See the sun.

A BIT O' VERSE

TO THE SONS OF FRANCE

May I pay humble tribute
To the Sons of France,
Who saw the lightning strike
But feared it not.

May mankind e'er remember
That the Sons of France
With courage rare, and might,
Struck back for right.

IN MEMORIAM OF DR. CHARLES D. LARKINS

Day dims; night falls; death comes;
Rustling leaves drop earthward;
Souls that bravely fought the fight,
Leave the strife and go — away.

SING TO ME

Sing to Me, O Wind!
Of oceans, and prairies, and crags,
Whirl before me the leaves
Of forests that stretch mile on mile;
Murmur softly like brooks,
And sing of the morning when birds
Cheer the earth with their song;
O wind of the world, Sing to me.

A BIT O' VERSE

Sing to me, O Love
Of moments when life seems compressed
Into smiles of your eyes;
When crackling of boughs seems your tread,
And sunlight recalls gracious smiles.

Sing to me, O my Soul,
Of my duty to play a man's part,
Chain and guide these hot fires
That smoulder within, when the strain
Calling brave men to Arms
Comes shouting into my heart;
Rouse me! guide to the right;
O lead me, my soul; Sing to me.

BIRTHDAY GREETINGS

Between the dawn and night
A warm and golden light
Kisses the flow'rs.

May bounteous gifts of Jove,
Of joy, of health, of love,
Deluge your life.

FOR US

The years have passed
For us!
A fiery mass,

A BIT O' VERSE

Of molten stuff,
Was cooled to earth —
For us.

The grass did grow
For us!
Sweet violet,
Soft rose of red,
And tulip bloom —
For us.

The human form
For us
Has been evolved,
That kindred souls
Might closer be —
As ours.

THE PALISADES

Stone, stone, impressive cliffs,
Guiding the mighty Hudson;
Gaunt, gaunt, centennial shores,
Lording o'er stream and landscape.

Blue, blue, the water flows,
Taking its way to sea;
Green, green, in summer days,
Foliage blends its sheen.

A BIT O' VERSE

White, white, the floating ice,
Specking the choppy blue,
Night, night, with mantle black,
Wraps in its gloom the scene.

THE AWAKENING

I looked into your eyes one night,
And saw that there was something new,
The childish trust, and careless laugh
Had gone — I knew not where unto.
We talked, and as you spoke, I knew
That you were seeking truth and life;
The soul; Man's heart; the self; these were
The pivots 'round which meditation moved.
O girl! when sixty summers add their weight
The mysteries will still be thine to weigh.

CAP' BUD

The mists have been blown away,
The sky is serene and blue,
No longer hangs a cloud
Across the vision of my eyes.

I see in the west the sun —
A bright red orb of fire;
Afar I hear the growl
Of cannon belching — death.

A BIT O' VERSE

Last night in a narrow trench
Half filled with mud and mire,
I stood with my friend Cap' Bud;
He showed me a picture of Her.

Ah no, you guess it not;
Her face was wrinkled and worn,
Her eyes looked gently at his
And his — were filled with tears.

“My mother,” he simply said,
And as he spoke it seemed
The earth caved in and night
With a thousand phantoms danced

Before my eyes. My head
Seemed pressed by a heavy weight,
My voice refused to speak;
Then sleep closed my weary eyes.

All this, I can recall
As my eyes now look at the sky;
I wonder what happened to Bud —
A letter? Angel, for me?

“To mother, good by!” He's dead?
When I'm up, angel nurse,
(It will be soon, will it not?)
I'll take this crumpled note

A BIT O' VERSE

To mother across the sea
And tell her about a man,
Unknown to fame, a prince
Of men, her son, Cap' Bud.

A VISION

Last night I dreamed that you and I,
Sat in the shade of friendly trees,
As the fleecy clouds drew pictures
Of Cupid shooting arrows.

It seemed that we two daisies asked
To die for truth a martyr's death,
And by the gold left petal-less
Was told the old, sweet story.

BATTLE

Still they fight!
The fields are strewn
With arms bright
Compressed tight
At day's noon.

'Tis a sight!
By the dim moon
Of the night
From a height
Shells deal doom.

A BIT O' VERSE

APART

The breeze that sighs
In the forest glens,
Its serenade tries
To sway your sense.

Dew-drops come down,
Bedecking the lawn,
With a precious crown,
Cast at your throne.

Silver moonbeams
Your evening flood,
To wrap you it seems,
In glistening hood.

You tread on flow'rs,
You sing above sighs,
For you my gold hours
Are of dull lead.

An open book
Do I lay my heart,
But you do not look,
We stand apart.

GUESS NOT!

Ise only a li'le feller, Nance,
But 'is one thing I knows,

A BIT O' VERSE

On Wednesday brudder Jim goes,
Wid sholdier men to France;
And he ain't skeered o' nuttin';
Guess not!
Jes wait 'till he's agoin'.

Don't worry at de Dutchmen's ships
Will persiscope New York,
For brudder Jim will talk
And work for us wid whips
An' things to win the fight, —
Guess so!
An' we'll come out right.

YOU

Pulsing, tremulous, throbbing,
Life, — strange mystic surge, —
Courses through me. . . .
Vague longing fills my heart.
Myriad stars wake myriad thoughts!
Moonlight and sunlight
Caught and reflected
Life have affected
Filled it to overflowing
With thought of You.

WHITE ROSES AND RED

A pure white rose
I throw to thee, who dressed in white

A BIT O' VERSE

Art standing with the moonlight's beams
Illum'ning thee against the night,
Whose drap'ry black and sombre gleams,
A fairy statue thou dost seem,
A cameo of black and white;
I toss to thee a pure white rose.

A rich red rose
I kiss and then thy lips so gay,
My butterfly, in gaudy gown,
Who dancest near the shim'ring bay,
With myriad hues of flowers 'round,
And twinkling bells, and joyful sounds;
A pastel, iridescent, gay,
I kiss the rich red rose you wear.

FAREWELL OLD PLAYMATE

Playmate of other hours, farewell!
The leaves of yesterday decay,
Rebirth and death are nature's rule,
Dismiss the old with parting sighs,
Rejoice that morning guilds the new,
And birds are singing, voices laugh.

Playmate of other days, farewell!
Like vines that climb o'er trellises,
Our lives in their full fruitage ripe
May clamber wide apart in time,
But side by side, deep in the soil,
The roots that mem'ry loves are wed.

A BIT O' VERSE

MY STAR

Afar in the heaven's dark sullen blue,
Thou gleamest as white as a lover who's true,
 I believe in thee;
 As I think of thee
When the golden sunlight has melted,
And the evening shadows have set
 O'er the valley of life,
 The loud spirit of strife
Is stilled, and the light, doleful breeze
Sings plaintively through valley trees;
 All is forgotten,
 Lost in the vision,
 And contemplation
 Of my star.

Above twinkling, myriad city lights,
That look furtively through the vista of night,
 Higher than all, afar
 Shines my silv'ry star,
Whose celestial glow flames when the floodtide
Of the human traffic at last dies,
 And the city rests 'till dawn —
 'Twixt the night and the morn.
I gaze and ignore city lights,
The valley, all sounds, all sights,
 All is forgotten,
 Lost in the vision,
 And contemplation
 Of my star.

A BIT O' VERSE

TO EDNA

A Sad Tale.

"Truth crushed to earth shall rise again,
The immortal years of God are hers."

The Beginning: A Fool There Was.

"Please take me skating in the park,"
Quoth She sweetly to Him one day,
"Indeed I will," said He to Her,
And forthwith they went out to skate.

The Irony of Fate.

The ice was fine, the evening clear,
Their hearts were young, their spirits free,
They raced along quite merrily,
Without forebodings of their fate.

The Crisis.

But sad to say, if truth be told,
Her weight was too much for mere ice,
A crackling sound. . . . two screams were heard. . .
And then — but 'tis another tale.

Retributive Justice.

I pulled out Edna! He was left
To scramble out alone; (I laugh).
The moral is: Young man, don't skate
With heavy weights, if you don't swim.

A BIT O' VERSE

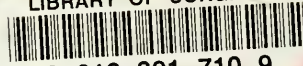
MY SEPULCHRE

When nature calls me back to rest,
Then take this frail old shell of mine,
And with the fire that has sustained
The engines man employs in life,
Destroy my form, and make it dust.

When ocean tides come in the bay,
The dust that was I, throw on the waves,
And with the change of tide I'll float
From New York harbor to the sea,
Into the boundless watery waste.

The rolling waves will be my couch,
The breakers on the shore my voice,
From Southern seas to Arctic ice,
From East to West will be my grave;
My spirit living in men's souls.

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